

know that a good sound bite does not always make for good policy. Such is the case here.

In order to pay for these particular campaign promises, at least temporarily, for parents of college students, the majority replaced a functioning lending system with an untested, highly controversial auction scheme. At the time, we warned that an auction would undercut loan accessibility for parents. We warned that the U.S. Department of Education was ill-equipped to implement such a complex and convoluted system. We warned that lenders were unlikely to participate in such a system and that, if they did, only a few were likely to bid, giving them near-monopoly control of the market. I wish it were not the case, but unfortunately, our worst predictions are coming true.

Several large lenders are choosing not to participate in this troubled initiative. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators has weighed in with serious concerns. Financial aid administrators will soon be assembling financial aid packages for the coming academic year, and NASFAA warns that current economic conditions could cause the pilot program to harm parent borrowers.

If the Department were to move forward, the few willing participants would be a virtual monopoly, and with so few participants, they may not be able to handle all of the loan volume necessary to ensure that all parents who are eligible for loans actually receive them. We cannot allow this to happen, so we are postponing the auction for 1 year in order to ensure that parents will not fall victim to the shortsighted policy that was enacted just 2½ years ago.

I support this legislation because the changes are necessary, but I hope this will serve as a lesson in going forward. Undercutting a successful, long-standing student loan program in order to achieve political goals was not a good idea in 2006, and it is not a good idea today.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the gentleman from Kentucky if he has any further speakers.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I do not have any further speakers.

Mr. HINOJOSA. In that case, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I support this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. We have worked with the majority to address pressing matters that impact students and families. This bill will ensure the smooth implementation of the bipartisan higher education reforms enacted last year. It will help student loan borrowers who have fallen behind to rebuild their damaged credit, and it will postpone a student loan auction that, whether or not it was a good idea 2½ years ago, simply does not make sense in the current economic climate.

I thank the majority for working with us. I have particularly enjoyed working with my colleague, Mr. HINOJOSA from Texas, and I appreciate him for working on these important matters and timely changes. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting "yes."

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1777.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 4 o'clock and 42 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1845

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ROSS) at 6 o'clock and 45 minutes p.m.

RAISING A QUESTION OF THE PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to a question of the privileges of the House and offer the resolution previously noticed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the resolution.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 295

Whereas, The Hill reported that a prominent lobbying firm specializing in obtaining defense earmarks for its clients, the subject of a "federal investigation into potentially corrupt political contributions," has given \$3.4 million in political donations to no less than 284 members of Congress.

Whereas, multiple press reports have noted questions related to campaign contributions made by or on behalf of the firm; including questions related to "straw man" contributions, the reimbursement of employees for political giving, pressure on clients to give, a suspicious pattern of giving, and the timing of donations relative to legislative activity.

Whereas, Roll Call has taken note of the timing of contributions from employees of the firm and its clients when it reported that they "have provided thousands of dollars worth of campaign contributions to key Members in close proximity to legislative activity, such as the deadline for earmark request letters or passage of a spending bill."

Whereas, CQ Today specifically noted a Member getting "\$25,000 in campaign contribution money from [the founder of the firm] and his relatives right after his subcommittee approved its spending bill in 2005."

Whereas, the Associated Press noted that Members received campaign contributions

from employees of the firm "around the time they requested" earmarks for companies represented by the firm.

Whereas, the Associated Press highlighted the "huge amounts of political donations" from the firm and its clients to select members and noted that "those political donations have followed a distinct pattern: The giving is especially heavy in March, which is prime time for submitting written earmark requests."

Whereas, clients of the firm received at least three hundred million dollars worth of earmarks in fiscal year 2009 appropriations legislation, including several that were approved even after news of the FBI raid of the firm's offices and Justice Department investigation into the firm was well known.

Whereas, the Associated Press reported that "the FBI says the investigation is continuing, highlighting the close ties between special-interest spending provisions known as earmarks and the raising of campaign cash."

Whereas, the persistent media attention focused on questions about the nature and timing of campaign contributions related to the firm, as well as reports of the Justice Department conducting research on earmarks and campaign contributions, raise concern about the integrity of Congressional proceedings and the dignity of the institution.

Now, therefore, be it: *Resolved*, that (a) the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, or a subcommittee of the committee designated by the committee and its members appointed by the chairman and ranking member, shall immediately begin an investigation into the relationship between the source and timing of past campaign contributions to Members of the House related to the raided firm and earmark requests made by Members of the House on behalf of clients of the raided firm.

(b) The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct shall submit a report of its findings to the House of Representatives within 2 months after the date of adoption of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The resolution qualifies.

MOTION TO TABLE

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to lay the resolution on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to table.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on laying House Resolution 295 on the table will be followed by 5-minute votes on suspending the rules and passing H.R. 20 and H.R. 479.

Remaining postponed votes will be taken later in the week.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 210, nays 173, answered "present" 13, not voting 35, as follows: